



Legal Services Advocacy Project
Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid
2324 University Avenue, Suite 101
St. Paul, MN 55114

February 5, 2021

The Honorable Patty Acomb
Vice Chair, Climate and Energy Finance and Policy
Minnesota House of Representatives
593 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Extension of Cold Weather Rule Legislation

Dear Vice Chair Acomb:

The Legal Services Advocacy Project (LSAP) writes to express its support for your legislation that will be formally introduced soon to extend by 15 days on either end Minnesota's Cold Weather Rule (CWR) period. LSAP provides legislative and policy advocacy, representing Legal Aid's clients and all low-income Minnesotans statewide.

The CWR provides vital protection for financially and otherwise vulnerable Minnesotans from utility disconnection during harsh weather periods, provided they make regular and affordable payments. Among many societal issues COVID has spotlighted, certainly one is the demonstration of how critical the continuity of utility service is for Minnesotans' health and safety, especially for elders. According to the National Center on Law & Elder Rights, "[t]he health and safety consequences of these terminations can be severe and even deadly for older adults."¹

Slightly expanding the period encompassed by the CWR would seemingly have no adverse consequences on other ratepayers, while helping more Minnesotans stay connected to essential utilities and even possibly save lives. As we all know harsh weather creating health and safety concerns can begin as early as October 1 and last as late as April 30. As one Harvard Journal noted, "In states [like Minnesota] with extreme temperatures, living without basic utility services may actually be impossible at times."²

Thank you for the opportunity to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron Elwood". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ron Elwood
Supervising Attorney

¹ Jenifer Bosco, National Consumer Law Center, *Issue Brief: Protecting Older Adults from Utility Disconnection* (Sept. 2018) (Contract No. HHSP233201650076A, from the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201.).

² Sonia K. McNeil, *Privacy and the Modern Grid*, 25 HARV. J.L. & TECH. 199, 217 (2011).